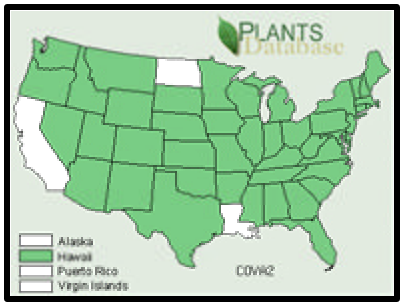
CROWN VETCH

Coronilla varia

DESCRIPTION: Crown vetch is a perennial legume that reproduces by seeds. It can form large clumps from creeping stems. The stems can be up to 6 feet (1.8 meters) long. Crown vetch has rhizomes up to 10 feet (3.04 meters) long which allow the plant to spread rapidly. The vegetative growth habit can rapidly cover and shade out native vegetation. A single plant may fully cover 70 to 100 square feet within a four year period. Compound leaves consist of 15-25 pairs of oblong leaflets. Pinkish flowers are clustered in umbels on long stalks. The flowers develop into narrow, flattened pods. The seeds are reported to be poisonous. Crown vetch blooms from May through August.



DISTRIBUTION: The natural distribution of crown vetch is Europe, southwest Asia and northern Africa. It is introduced or naturalized in the United States from Maine to South Dakota, south to Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Illinois, and Missouri. It is widespread in Missouri, having been extensively planted on rights-of-way along the interstate highway system.

HABITAT: Crown vetch has been grown extensively in the northern two-thirds of the United States for temporary ground cover, erosion control, and as a green fertilizer crop. It is also used as a bank stabilizer along roads and waterways. This plant prefers open, sunny areas. It occurs along roadsides and other rights-of-way, in open fields and on gravel bars along streams.

CONTROL: Crown vetch is a serious management threat to natural areas due to its seeding ability and rapid vegetative spreading by rhizomes. This aggressive exotic is now widespread along roadsides, from where it may become a serious invader of natural areas. Control methods include:

- Mowing
- Herbicides
- Prescribed burning may be effective against seedlings or in slowing the spread of crown vetch, but will not control large populations
    - **References:** http://plants.usda.gov www.conservation.state.mo.us/